

by rounded summits, supporting an original, or as some writers have termed, a *local* soil, varying, as has now been frequently repeated, according to the nature of the subjacent strata. The talcose and hornblende slates yield red soils of an ochry character, having considerable body, easily improved by plaster and clover, and requiring nothing but lime to render them very productive. These form what were formerly considered among the best lands of the county, and have been exhausted by repeated and alternating crops of tobacco and corn, without any rest or any return of vegetable nutriment. Hence, a large proportion of this part of the county presents a succession of waste fields, calculated to impress the observer with the idea that they are irreclaimably barren, were it not that some few, and yet but feeble efforts at improvement, have been crowned with complete success; tobacco, corn, rye, oats, potatoes, and even wheat, being found, by a little good management, to yield profitable returns. These efforts will be more particularly noticed in a subsequent part of this report.

Concluding the account of the physical geography of this division, it may be stated, that it embraces some fine tracts of woodland, consisting of oaks, hickory, and dogwood, with sycamore, poplar, and walnuts in the richer bottoms. It is, as the other portions of the county are, well watered; the valleys of the several streams within it affording valuable meadow lands; and almost every where there can be obtained an abundance of pure and wholesome water.

3d. *Basin of the Seneka*.—The Seneka takes its rise in the Fork of Parr's ridge, and besides numerous smaller tributaries, receives on its Eastern side three more important branches, the Whetstone, Long Draught, and Dawes' branch—and on the western side, the Little Seneka, and the Dry Seneka, that are all fed by copious and constant springs; so that this region likewise is discovered to be well watered, for agricultural as well as manufacturing and economical purposes. It is in this portion, too, that the principal mineral resource of the county has hitherto been discovered, occurring within quite a considerable tract of land, in which *serpentine* is the prevailing rock. The tract referred to, appears to be confined to the Eastern side of the Seneka, and extends from the dividing ridge between the head waters of Seneka and those of the Patuxent, in a southern direction nearly down to the Potomac. It embraces two minor ridges known in the county as the Oak ridge, covered by black jack, and the Pines. The mineral contained within it is usually designated as the *chrome ore*, the nature and value of which will be more particularly indicated under the head of the mineral resources of the county. Wherever the serpentine rocks occur the soil is found to be poor, supporting a stunted growth of oak and pines, and seldom adapted to any profitable cultivation; it is fortunate, therefore, that there should be found beneath it something to give value to the region.

On the west side of the Seneka, between it and the Little Seneka,